

Missouri Blue Ribbon Task Force On Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

Final Report

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Missouri Blue Ribbon Task Force On Youth Aging Out

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Additionally, there were foster parents, community health professionals, and members of other community organizations who met with the task force to assist with this report. The leadership and staff of the Children's Division were generous with their time and resources, and attentive to the requests of the task force. The task force also wishes to thank Casey Family Programs for their considerable support and for the valuable resources which they provided.

Executive Summary

Making the transition from childhood to adulthood is a gradual and complicated process made easier by the support of families and communities. For youth in out of home care in Missouri, this transition presents specific challenges that come from the disruption of natural family support systems. While these challenges are regularly met and overcome by individual youth, research shows overwhelmingly poorer outcomes for these young adults as they move into independent adulthood.

However, a number of strategies have been identified for improving outcomes for youth aging out of care in Missouri. Core themes that emerged during the development of these strategies included the importance of youth voice and youth-centered planning, starting early in preparing for adulthood, the need to improve access to data and to use data to inform and improve services, and the importance of increased collaboration.

The specific recommendations outlined in the report are meant to be a starting point for improving outcomes for youth aging out of care in Missouri. This is a time of great opportunity for Missouri to engage in this work. Important legislation has recently been passed at the federal and state level that can support improved outcomes for these youth. The momentum generated by this legislation, and by the work of this task force, can be carried forward on behalf of Missouri's youth and young adults.

Following is a list of the recommendations of the Missouri Blue Ribbon Task Force on Youth Aging Out of Care. The recommendations are presented in further detail later in this report.

Recommendations

1. Youth in foster care--especially older youth—should be at the center of their own permanency planning. Youth should be proactively empowered by providing them information about their rights, services and permanency options. This information should be made available using multiple sources; including during case planning meetings, by pamphlets and booklets, and in an online resource.
2. Research shows that youth who remain in care beyond the age of 18 generally benefit from the supports that they receive by being in care. (Courtney, Dec 2007) Youth should be fully informed about their right to stay in care until age 21, and about the supports and services available to them if they do stay in care. Missouri should also consider a policy which allows youth who have chosen to leave care to re-enter foster care should they decide to do so before their 21st birthday.
3. Transition planning for every older youth in care in Missouri should be strengthened through a comprehensive approach that includes having youth at the center of the planning process, that utilizes a team approach, and that engages families and collaborators including Chafee providers, the Department of Higher Education, and the Department of Labor. A strong partnership with the courts can lead to increased accountability for ensuring that transition

plans are in place. Transition planning should start early, and should take place within the context of concurrent permanency planning.

4. Children's Division staff working with older youth, as well as staff of private provider child welfare agencies working with older youth, should receive the support necessary to fully meet the needs of those youth. This support includes quality specialized training, opportunities for professional development, fair compensation, quality supervision and access to a broad array of services.
5. While school moves for youth in foster care should not occur whenever possible, an improved process for the movement of and access to school records should be developed in order to minimize out-of-school time when placement moves do occur. Development of this process will require the collaboration of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Social Services, and other key stakeholders. Missouri should fully fund and implement the provisions in the Foster Care Education Bill of Rights that require timely access to and processing of school records.
6. While all students are required to meet minimum state standard requirements for high school graduation, graduation requirements can change from one school district to another. School districts should remove impediments to a foster youth meeting graduation requirements within 4 years due to school changes. Strategies to ensure that this happens include developing an individualized graduation plan when a youth in care first transfers to a new school district, creating flexible opportunities for students to meet additional graduation requirements, and implementing school foster care liaisons as legislated in the new Foster Care Education Bill of Rights.
7. Missouri should develop a plan to ensure that youth leaving the foster care system will be guaranteed that financial barriers to accessing and completing public in-state postsecondary education or training program are removed. Mechanisms to be considered should include tuition waivers, grants, use of federal and state dollars, and scholarships. Missouri should fully fund and implement the tuition and fee waiver provisions in the recently passed Judiciary Omnibus Bill.
8. Missouri should create a plan to provide the supports necessary for young adults exiting the foster care system to be successful in their pursuit of postsecondary education or vocational training. This plan should include the utilization of already existing college preparation and on-campus support programs such as GEAR UP and TRIO programs, the creation of housing supports and options for students to utilize during the academic year and school breaks, and the creation of a campaign to raise awareness and build public will to support such programs.
9. Increased collaboration is necessary at the local and regional level in order to improve employment outcomes for youth exiting foster care. Local partnerships should be fostered between the Department of Economic Development, Workforce Investment Board (WIB) staff, the Children's Division, Chafee contractors, and local businesses. Each regional Workforce Investment Board's Youth Council should include child welfare professionals as well as foster parents and youth themselves. A plan should be developed--in collaboration with the Department of Insurance, DSS, and the private sector--to increase access to affordable auto insurance for Missouri's older youth in care and those aging out of care.

10. An annual recognition program should be established by the Governor's office to honor Missouri employers who hire youth in and aging out of foster care. Additionally, efforts should be made to make all employers aware of expanded tax incentives already available for those who hire disconnected youth.
11. An employment summit should be convened with the goal of raising awareness of employment needs and resources for youth in and aging out of care, of networking among youth and providers, and of providing skill-building opportunities for youth and staff. The summit could be co-convened by the Department of Economic Development and DSS, and could target youth, caregivers, Chafee providers and others.
12. A cross-systems plan should be developed to address the need for better data sharing between health, mental health, and child welfare systems in Missouri. An integrated data system would allow more efficient access to services and an increased ability for youth to advocate for and manage their own health and mental health needs.
13. Older youth in foster care should be better educated regarding health, maintaining healthy lifestyles, and in advocating for their own health needs. This could be addressed in an annual youth summit, with a segment focusing on wellness. Additionally, child welfare staff, independent living providers and caregivers should be educated to increase their own knowledge and their ability to support youth.
14. A plan should be developed to more adequately meet the mental health needs of Missouri youth aging out of foster care. The plan should address ways of increasing utilization of MOHealthNet and necessary mental health services, as well as assuring access to other funding sources and providers, the creation of specialized drop-in centers and consolidating existing resources to address the current need.
15. Missouri mental health providers should investigate how trauma-based and trauma-informed clinical approaches to case practice might benefit children and youth in care. Training on trauma-informed evidence-based practices should be provided for child welfare staff and for state and contracted mental health professionals working with children and youth in foster care.
16. A formalized on-going collaborative of agencies and organizations in Missouri that serve older youth in and aging out of foster care should be created, sponsored by the Governor's office. This collaboration could build on the work of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Youth Aging Out, and should include public and private youth-serving agencies, the business and faith community, as well as youth and alumni stakeholders. The function of the collaboration, over the next three years, would be to increase communication and awareness about resources available at the state and community level, to advocate for the needs of this population and build public will, and to provide a mechanism for better cross-system collaboration.
17. A collaborative plan to address the housing needs of youth aging out of foster care should be developed by the public and private agencies, the business community and other key stakeholders.

Introduction

The Missouri Task Force on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care was formed on August 12, 2008. The panel consisted of seventeen experts and stakeholders from the public and private sectors. The charge of the task force was to assess resources available to support youth in or exiting from care, and to recommend ways to strengthen communication and collaboration among youth-serving agencies with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes and futures for Missouri's youth exiting from foster care.

The task force met eight times between October 2008 and May 2009. Panel members represented multiple agencies and stakeholders, including those from juvenile justice, employment, mental health, private enterprise, the faith-based community, alumni of foster care, foster parents, primary and postsecondary education, and child welfare. Work sessions included presentations from national child welfare experts, as well as experts and stakeholders from across Missouri.

The Task Force is pleased to present its findings and recommendations to Governor Jay Nixon and appreciates the support it has received in completing this important work.

Background

At any given time, there are approximately 500,000 children and youth in foster care in the United States. Most of those will experience a short stay in foster care before being reunited with their families. Many will not be reunited with their families, but will instead exit the foster care system through another form of permanent placement such as adoption or legal guardianship by a relative or other caring adult. However, each year approximately 25,000 young adults for whom no permanent placement has been found will exit from the foster care system by "aging out"--simply by reaching a milestone birthday. It is the responsibility of state child welfare systems--and the workers in those systems--to strive to find permanent placements for all youth in their care, including these older youth, while at the same time preparing them to be successful as young adults in the event that they do age out of foster care.

The challenges in transitioning to adulthood faced by a young person who ages out of foster care have been well-enumerated. Many of these challenges relate to the absence of the type of support systems that come from long and stable membership in a family and community. Some challenges relate to dealing with the trauma associated with childhoods marked by family separation, neglect or abuse. Ultimately, youth aging out of foster care often lack a financial, social and emotional safety net that allows them to safely make and learn from mistakes.

Associated with these many challenges, and not surprisingly, poor outcomes for transitioning youth have been well-documented. Various studies show that only 3% of youth aging out of foster care will graduate from college, up to 35% will experience homelessness soon after aging out, up to 40% will become parents by the age of 20, up to 25% will be incarcerated, and many will struggle to find jobs that pay a livable wage. (The Pew Charitable Trusts, May 2007)

In Missouri, 22% of the approximately 9,800 youth in foster care are age 16 or older. On average, 266 youth age out of foster care each year in Missouri on their 18th birthday. (Citizens for Missouri's Children, March 2008) The challenges that Missouri's youth face in transitioning to adulthood largely mirror those seen nationally. It is estimated that between one-third and one-half of youth in the state's foster care system never graduate from high school. (Citizens for Missouri's Children, March 2008)

The state of Missouri provides a variety of supports and services to older youth both while they are in care and after they leave care. At the core of the services is the Children's Division's Older Youth Program, which includes the services and programs described below.

The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program provides basic independent living services to help youth prepare for and make the successful transition from adolescence to adulthood for youth age 14-21 in out of home care. The program is slightly different throughout the state to meet the individual needs of each youth. Life skill areas of focus include education, daily living, money management, housing, self care/health, social relationships, transportation, and career planning/work life.

The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program also provides aftercare services for those youth who have left care at age 17.5 and have not yet reached age 21. Aftercare services are flexible, short term and used as a safety net to meet the needs of the youth after they have exited Children's Division custody. Aftercare services may include support, emergency services, educational, housing or healthcare assistance, and job training.

The Transitional Living Program is available to youth age 16-21. This program consists of placement options for youth to receive guidance and support while obtaining life skills and independence. There are three living arrangements for youth in this program: Transitional Living Advocate Program, Transitional Living Scattered Site Apartment, and Transitional Living Group Home.

The Education and Training Voucher Program offers funds to foster youth and former foster youth to enable them to attend accredited colleges, universities and vocational training institutions after completion of high school or obtaining a GED. Students may receive up to \$5000 per year as they pursue higher education. These funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis to students out of the Missouri foster care system.

While the responsibility for preparing youth who are aging out of foster care to make successful transitions to adulthood belongs to the child welfare system, fulfilling this responsibility requires partnership with a host of others: collaborators from other youth-serving systems--such as education, health care, and employment--service providers, the business community, community organizations, families and the youth themselves.

Providing additional context to this report is the recent passage of an important piece of federal legislation, H.R. 6893: *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008*, commonly referred to as Fostering Connections. This historic piece of legislation offers a number of promising supports for youth transitioning out of foster care, including giving states federal support for the option of extending care until the age of 21. Additionally, states may be able to claim Title IV-E reimbursement for some supports for older youth that are currently being funded with state dollars. The legislation also requires that youth transitioning out of care have a transition plan in place no later than 90 days before their date of aging out, and extends eligibility for some supports to young adults who have entered kinship guardianship or been adopted after the age of 16. Prior to the passage of this legislation, Missouri already had implemented many of the provisions that it contained, including the option for youth to stay in care until the age of 21.

Findings and Recommendations

The recommendations in this report have been organized into five domains. Four of the domains are individual life domains, and the fifth is a system domain. The domains are:

1. Permanency and Life-long Connections
2. Education
3. Employment and Job Readiness
4. Health and Mental Health
5. Cross-Systems Collaboration

During the course of developing the recommendations, there were several overarching themes that consistently emerged. These themes can be found woven throughout the recommendations, and are also important enough to warrant individual enumeration.

- In designing and delivering effective services for older youth, it is vitally important to engage older youth in foster care and alumni of foster care. This engagement should be extended through all parts of the system: including youth-driven case planning, utilizing youth and alumni voices in service delivery design and in staff and parent trainings, and in the on-going quality improvement processes.
- Data plays a critical role in understanding how Missouri's transitioning youth are faring, in determining what the on-going needs of these youth are, and in evaluating how well service components are working. Additionally, the sharing of data and information across service systems—information about resources available, or about individual school or medical records, for example-- is a critical strategy for removing systemic barriers to success for young people.
- Begin preparing youth for adulthood early. Developmentally appropriate assessments, activities and services related to education, employment and transition planning should start early in order to ensure adequate preparation. Foster families should be enlisted in this early preparation to mirror the process of lifelong learning that children learn in their families of origin.

- On-going collaboration and improved communication are important strategies for maximizing the resources and energies of Missouri's youth-serving agencies and community stakeholders.

Permanency and Life-long Connections

Research shows that children are best able to thrive and to develop into successful adults in the care of a permanent, stable, loving family. Thus, while the concept of permanency has multiple implications, one of the core principles is the primacy of family and the value of legal permanency. There are many financial, socioeconomic and legal supports that come from legal membership in a family. Another important aspect of permanency is "relational" permanency that may be found regardless of legal status. Such permanency might be realized through informal permanent placement with relatives, through a long-term relationship with a caring adult, or through a support network of a community of peers.

Achieving permanency for all of the youth in the care of the state of Missouri, including older youth, should remain a high priority for the state. No young person in Missouri should exit care without permanent lifelong connections to one or more stable, caring adult within the context of family and community relationships. On-going efforts to find legal permanent placements for older youth should happen simultaneous with efforts to help them develop permanent connections with caring adults, siblings, and peer communities, along with efforts to prepare them for adult living. It should never be assumed that a youth is too old to find permanent adult relationships that we all need.

Strategies that support permanency and permanent connections for older youth include placing youth at the center of their own team planning process, strengthening healthy relationships that the youth identifies as important to him or her, and involving a broad range of family and community resources in developing life-long connections. All adults involved in the youth's life should continually be searching for permanent connections and helping to strengthen relationships that might result in a permanency.

Recommendations:

1. Youth in foster care--especially older youth—should be at the center of their own permanency planning. Youth should be proactively empowered by providing them information about their rights, services and permanency options. This information should be made available using multiple sources; including during case planning meetings, by pamphlets and booklets, and in an online resource.
2. Research shows that youth who remain in care beyond the age of 18 generally benefit from the supports that they receive by being in care. (Courtney, Dec 2007) Youth should be fully informed about their right to stay in care until age 21, and about the supports and services available to them if they do stay in care. Missouri should also consider a policy which allows youth who have chosen to leave care to re-enter foster care should they decide to do so before their 21st birthday.

3. Transition planning for every older youth in care in Missouri should be strengthened through a comprehensive approach that includes having youth at the center of the planning process, that utilizes a team approach, and that engages families and collaborators including Chafee providers, the Department of Higher Education, and the Department of Labor. A strong partnership with the courts can lead to increased accountability for ensuring that transition plans are in place. Transition planning should start early, and should take place within the context of concurrent permanency planning.
4. Children's Division staff working with older youth, as well as staff of private provider child welfare agencies working with older youth, should receive the support necessary to fully meet the needs of those youth. This support includes quality specialized training, opportunities for professional development, fair compensation, quality supervision and access to a broad array of services.

Education

Attainment of a quality education is clearly an important component of positioning young people for their greatest opportunity for career success and financial independence. Critical aspects of educational success include attainment of a high school or equivalent degree, access to postsecondary education and training opportunities, and access to supports that promote success in those higher education endeavors.

Children and youth in foster care are presented with many specific challenges that threaten their educational success. School placement disruptions, lack of emotional and academic support systems, and a lack of consistent educational advocates are just a few of the barriers that youth in care face. Out-of-school time--whether due to school placement moves, school suspension, or attendance at court hearings--often significantly impacts not only a youth in care's academic learning, but their ability to advance at grade level. Too often, a placement move results in lost days or weeks of enrollment while school records are being processed or Individualized Education Plans (IEP) are being reviewed. Additionally, placement moves may result in the loss of credits required for advancing at grade level, or the failure to meet graduation requirements. Identification of the educational needs of children when they first enter foster care and on-going attention to their educational growth is critical for the successful transition to secondary and postsecondary education.

Missouri recently passed the Foster Care Education Bill of Rights, which included several important provisions for supporting educational success for youth in foster care. Included among these are the designation of a foster care liaison in each school district, language supporting the rights of children to remain in their home school, and language reinforcing the need for expediting school records processing for youth in foster care.

At the postsecondary level, youth transitioning from foster care benefit from access to a wide continuum of educational opportunities; including four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, and certificate training programs that target specific job training. Having access to these programs means being academically prepared for them, being informed about all of the options available, being supported through the application and enrollment process, and being provided with financial resources that turn opportunities into realities.

States have incorporated a wide range of strategies in creating financial opportunities for youth from foster care to pay for postsecondary education or training. These strategies can include both public and private funding sources to eliminate most financial barriers for accessing postsecondary programs. These include use of Chafee Education and Training Vouchers (ETV's), tuition and fee waivers, Pell Grants, Work Study and state funded need grants and scholarships. Scholarships funded wholly by states, by states in partnership with the private sector, or through private sources can also play an important role in eliminating financial aid barriers.

In Missouri the recently passed Judiciary Omnibus Bill contains a provision that would establish a tuition and fee waiver program for youth from Missouri's foster care system to attend state universities. Such a waiver program would provide a solid foundation for creating access to the state university system for youth in the state's care.

Another challenge that states are increasingly addressing is that of creating support systems to help these young adults successfully stay in school and graduate. Postsecondary education and training programs need to be ready to receive and support students coming from foster care. These supports include access to tutoring, educational mentoring, access to on-campus support groups, and having housing options available during school breaks. The recently reauthorized Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) includes provisions that allow federal TRIO grantees to target student populations with particular needs, including those in or from foster care. These programs support at-risk secondary students to graduate from high school, enter college and complete their degrees or certificates. HEOA requires TRIO programs to identify and make available services including mentoring, tutoring, and other services to youth in foster care. Guides and frameworks are now available to help secondary and postsecondary education and training programs to support students in and from foster care.

In addressing all of the postsecondary education and training needs discussed above, including both financing and other supports, an important strategy for states is to incorporate a broad holistic approach that includes federal and state resources, the business community, college and university alumni associations, and local community resources. Using this comprehensive approach, Missouri can send a message to youth in care that they can be assured that they will have an opportunity to achieve success in pursuing their postsecondary education and goals.

Recommendations:

1. While school moves for youth in foster care should not occur whenever possible, an improved process for the movement of and access to school records should be developed in order to minimize out-of-school time when placement moves do occur.

Development of this process will require the collaboration of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Social Services, and other key stakeholders. Missouri should fully fund and implement the provisions in The Foster Care Education Bill of Rights that require timely access to and processing of school records.

2. While all students are required to meet minimum state standard requirements for high school graduation, graduation requirements can change from one school district to another. School districts should remove impediments to a foster youth meeting graduation requirements within 4 years due to school changes. Strategies to ensure that this happens include developing an individualized graduation plan when a youth in care first transfers to a new school district, creating flexible opportunities for students to meet additional graduation requirements, and implementing school foster care liaisons as legislated in the new Foster Care Education Bill of Rights.
3. Missouri should develop a plan to ensure that youth leaving the foster care system will be guaranteed that financial barriers to accessing and completing public in-state postsecondary education or training program are removed. Mechanisms to be considered should include tuition waivers, grants, use of federal and state dollars, and scholarships. Missouri should fully fund and implement the tuition and fee waiver provisions in the recently passed Judiciary Omnibus Bill.
4. Missouri should create a plan to provide the supports necessary for young adults exiting the foster care system to be successful in their pursuit of postsecondary education or vocational training. This plan should include the utilization of already existing college preparation and on-campus support programs such as GEAR UP and TRIO programs, the creation of housing supports and options for students to utilize during the academic year and school breaks, and the creation of a campaign to raise awareness and build public will to support such programs.

Employment and Job Readiness

Youth transitioning from foster care face the reality of trying to earn a livable wage in an increasingly competitive job market. While many facets of job readiness are linked directly to educational achievement, there are many other important activities and competencies that can increase likelihood of obtaining and keeping gainful employment.

According to Altschuler, et al, "Recent research has pointed out that connection to the labor force before emancipation from foster care at age 18 is the strongest predictor of employment at age 24." (David Altschuler, 2009) This is a strong endorsement for early engagement of youth who are in care in activities that expose them to the world of work, whether that consists of job shadowing, worksite visits, part-time or summer jobs, internships, or volunteer opportunities. Social workers and case managers can increase access to these opportunities by enlisting the help of foster and birth families, Chafee providers, workforce partners, and business and community partners.

Access to adequate transportation is an on-going challenge for many youth in care and those who have transitioned from foster care. Obtaining enough money to purchase, insure and maintain a vehicle is often not possible without employment, and yet obtaining and maintaining a job without access to a vehicle may in turn be difficult. Additionally, obtaining a driver's license can present challenges, and obtaining affordable auto insurance as a teenager without a parent's policy to join may be cost-prohibitive. Strategies for addressing the cost of auto insurance might include a subsidy for foster parents who purchase state-minimum auto insurance coverage for youth, or the creation of a state-wide special insurance program.

Recommendations:

1. Increased collaboration is necessary at the local and regional level in order to improve employment outcomes for youth exiting foster care. Local partnerships should be fostered between the Department of Economic Development, Workforce Investment Board (WIB) staff, the Children's Division, Chafee contractors, and local businesses. Each regional Workforce Investment Board's Youth Council should include child welfare professionals as well as foster parents and youth themselves. A plan should be developed--in collaboration with the Department of Insurance, DSS, and the private sector--to increase access to affordable auto insurance for Missouri's older youth in care and those aging out of care.
2. An annual recognition program should be established by the Governor's office to honor Missouri employers who hire youth in and aging out of foster care. Additionally, efforts should be made to make all employers aware of expanded tax incentives already available for those who hire disconnected youth.
3. An employment summit should be convened with the goal of raising awareness of employment needs and resources for youth in and aging out of care, of networking among youth and providers, and of providing skill-building opportunities for youth and staff. The summit could be co-convened by the Department of Economic Development and DSS, and could target youth, caregivers, Chafee providers and others.

Health and Mental Health

Youth transitioning from foster care face a number of specific challenges related to healthcare. Primary among these, for youth in many states, is access to medical insurance once they exit foster care. Management of and access to prescription medications, access to and maintenance of prior medical history, and high rates of pregnancy are also key issues for these young adults.

Access to appropriate mental health services is also a key contributor to success for transitioning youth. One recent study indicated that as many as 25% of alumni of foster care may experience post-traumatic stress. By comparison, the general population experiences post-traumatic stress at a rate of 4%. (P.J. Pecora, 2005)

Recommendations:

1. A cross-systems plan should be developed to address the need for better data sharing between health, mental health, and child welfare systems in Missouri. An integrated data system would allow more efficient access to services and an increased ability for youth to advocate for and manage their own health and mental health needs.
2. Older youth in foster care should be better educated regarding health, maintaining healthy lifestyles, and in advocating for their own health needs. This could be addressed in an annual youth summit, with a segment focusing on wellness. Additionally, child welfare staff, independent living providers and caregivers should be educated to increase their own knowledge and their ability to support youth.
3. A plan should be developed to more adequately meet the mental health needs of Missouri youth aging out of foster care. The plan should address ways of increasing utilization of MOHealthNet and necessary mental health services, as well as assuring access to other funding sources and providers, the creation of specialized drop-in centers and consolidating existing resources to address the current need.
4. Missouri mental health providers should investigate how trauma-based and trauma-informed clinical approaches to case practice might benefit children and youth in care. Training on trauma-informed evidence-based practices should be provided for child welfare staff and for state and contracted mental health professionals working with children and youth in foster care.

Cross-system Collaboration

Improving outcomes for older youth transitioning from foster care in Missouri will require increased collaboration across multiple systems, agencies and sectors. Collaboration will increase access to information, maximize already existing resources, and ensure on-going public and political will to pay attention to the needs of these youth and young adults.

Recommendations:

1. A formalized on-going collaborative of agencies and organizations in Missouri that serve older youth in and aging out of foster care should be created, sponsored by the Governor's office. This collaboration could build on the work of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Youth Aging Out, and should include public and private youth-serving agencies, the business and faith community, as well as youth and alumni stakeholders. The function of the collaboration, over the next three years, would be to increase communication and awareness about resources available at the state and community level, to advocate for the needs of this population and build public will, and to provide a mechanism for better cross-system collaboration.

2. A collaborative plan to address the housing needs of youth aging out of foster care should be developed by the public and private agencies, the business community and other key stakeholders.

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